



November 17, 2021

Black Light Derby

Black light derby? Wait! What? What exactly is that?

The black light derby (BLD) is a different twist on your Ranger Derby. You guessed it. It is held under black lights. It's no more complicated than that. So why do a BLD? Add the **wow** factor to your events. Did you ever stop to think why participation levels drop off in your outpost or district events? If boys find the events to be the same year after year, they lose interest. As Rangers leaders, we need to try to put the **wow** factor in all our events. They should never be just another repeat of last year or the year before that.

So going back to 2012, the leaders at outpost 17 in Sumter, SC were trying to think of ways that would keep the current Rangers interested in their annual events and bring new interest from outsiders who need to be mentored in Christ. Derby had come and gone, once again, only bringing thirty participants to the SC East Division Derby, including the Friends and Family class, the Adult class, and the Outlaw class. (See class specifications for Outlaw class at end of article.) We just couldn't seem to break that number, no matter how many more boys we were seeing at our outposts.

Our youth pastor had the youth room swagged out with black lights and fluorescent paint on the walls. As a 40-something leader, I thought it was pretty cool. I asked the other leaders what they thought about doing Ranger

Derby under black lights. Although we didn't really know where to start, we tried to come up with some ways to get lighting down to the track. Before you knew it, we had a plan for a "dry run" with simplistic wooden frames holding the light fixtures near the track. I wouldn't call it a failure, but it wasn't too impressive either. It was the first spark!

The following year, we decided to have our outpost derby using black light. We replaced a section of the gym's fluorescent bulbs with black light fluorescent bulbs. That made our event more impressive. We had more participation from our outpost with approximately twenty-five entries.

We felt the BLD concept was good enough to host the division derby and advertised it to the entire South Carolina district. Wow! We had over sixty entries. At the time, we thought the event went very well. When we look at it now, we see a great starting point. We have made so many improvements since this pioneering event. Other outposts in South Carolina have also taken the BLD concept and run with it. (This link will take you to that first division BLD that was held: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJLmrOygOzg>)

Now, we run the track down the center of the gym using our stage lighting system (set to UV) to light the track. We also are incorporating additional area lighting this fall at our BLD derby. We have outposts making a 3-hour drive to participate in this event every year. We have had as many as ninety entries, but have drawn consistently between sixty-five and eighty-five entries.

Tips & Suggestions to help you create a BLD event:

There are several factors to consider with lighting the event—black light and ambient light. On the Internet, outposts can find some great black light sources that will provide a decent coverage area. Many of these lighting systems come at a reasonable cost. You'll need to research to find the one that will best fit your meeting area. If these don't become a permanent part of the meeting area that other groups like youth utilize, you may need to find ways to hang them over the track or put them on stands to be positioned near the track. You can purchase prefab stands or make your own. They do need to be strategically located in less trafficked areas or built sturdy enough so no one will accidentally knock them over.

You need to limit the sources of outside light so the black lights will be most effective. If the event is held during the day, the outpost will need to consider how to block the light that comes in from doors and windows. Although you are trying to make the black lights as effective as possible, you will need to maintain some ambient white light so nobody trips. Think about your other Derby events. Do you ever have Ranger Kids sprawled out on the floor near the

track while people are trying to move around them? That is a tripping hazard in the making, especially in a black light setting.

How do you create ambient lighting without detracting from the black light too much? The options are limitless, but here are a few. Keep some lights on in the hallways so people can find the restrooms or concessions area. If the hallway lights are too bright, look for dimmer lighting sources, such as night lights or strings of Christmas lights. If you find you need some ambient lighting near the track, try using a few strings of Christmas rope lights as the boundary around the tracks instead of border of flags. Today, LED lighting strips are much easier to find than when we first started the BLD event. If you are not able to string lights as a boundary around the track, create a boundary that will fluoresce under black light. For example, you could paint orange cones with white fluorescent paint.

We take every opportunity to create fluorescent decorations or accents in the event area. You can paint or use fluorescent tape on the lanes of your racetrack. Even if a car doesn't have fluorescent paint on it, you can still see it coming down the track. Make decorations that will fluoresce or reflect light. Silver trash cans around the event area look great under the black light.

At our event, we encourage face painting. If you have people available, you may even create your own face painting booth for the kids that attend. (Be sure to use fluorescent face paints.) If you want to add a level of competition, give an award to the best painted face. Kids who don't submit a car to race may still be able to participate in the activities of the day through face painting opportunities.

How do we keep track of the cars with such little light? We have taken simple 1 x 2" lengths of wood and numbered spaces wide enough for the cars to rest on or behind. In a black light setting, a simple head light or small lamp can be used to read the number and quickly return the cars to their numbered spaces.

An early decision you will need to make is whether or not to open car submissions from others outside the outpost. We use our event as an outreach to our community. It's an easy way to introduce Royal Rangers to new families. At my outpost, I typically invite coworkers to judge the for Best-in-Show category. Many times, once they see it, they tell me, "I've gotta get my kids (or nephews or whomever) in this event the next time you have it." In Matthew 4:19 and Mark 1:17 (NKJV), Jesus calls Peter and Andrew to be disciples by telling them, "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men." Our lure is the Ranger Derby. Once we get parents and kids to the event, we let the fellowship and the devotional have that impact on them.

Not only do we use the BLD as an outreach but we also get a lot of interest from friends, family, and some of the older men in the church who want to submit cars. Some of the girls in Girls Ministries submit cars. Everyone of all ages get involved in the event.

Something that helps make our derby successful is having a Derby car prep night. We host this a couple of months in advance. It gives families who may not have the tools or experience a chance to get some help making their cars. We round up scroll saws, drills, sandpaper, etc., and we provide experienced people to help them get their cars virtually ready for their paint by the time they leave that evening. (Another outpost that started a Derby prep camp said they get most of their new outpost leaders from this single event.) Men really push testosterone when you talk woodworking, cars, and racing. As you know, men enjoy being around other men doing things shoulder to shoulder like building and racing Ranger Derby cars.

Since we pioneered this event, other groups have begun marketing wheels for cars that glow under black light. If getting these types of accessories for the cars in your outpost interests you, then all you need to do is search the Internet.

We know the BLD is lots of fun for everyone involved—kids, leaders, parents, friends, etc. We also know the most important thing we need to have to be successful is a great devotional prior to the start of the racing. We have nothing unless He is in it!

I hope that this is enough information for you all to have many successful Black Light Derbies. I may be contacted at RoyalRanger17@gmail.com if you have further inquiries.

May all of your events provide the **wow!**
Mark T. Sneider
SC East Division Coordinator
Outpost 17 AR & ER Commander

Outlaw Class in South Carolina:

As the name implies, this is a class in which you can use all your ingenuity and imagination. The class is open to anyone. There are a few simple rules to follow.

1. Car Kit, Rule 1 is waived, any car kit may be used, or the car may be built from scratch.
2. Race Car Specifications, Rule 2 is waived; however, the car must fit on the track, run on the track without interfering with other cars, and meet 6, 7, and 8 below.
3. Race Car Restrictions, Rule 3a is waived.
4. Wheels and Wheelbase, Rule 5 is waived; however, the car must fit on the track and run on the track without interfering with the other cars.
5. The car may not be entered in another class.
6. No car shall weight more than 32 oz. (908 grams).
7. No car may be more than 3" in height.
8. The total allowable distance from the front nose of the car to the rear wheel may not exceed 8 ¼" and total length may not exceed 10" in order to fit on the starting gate mechanism of the track. ("Clearly a Wingnut rule 2019")
9. A car may only be run for 1 year in the Outlaw class. See 3e.
10. All other Royal Rangers Derby rules apply.



Royal Rangers Leaders